

DETERMINING ORGANIC FERTILIZER RECOMMENDATIONS

With the increased use of various organic fertilizers in home gardens and organic farm production, it is important to collect information on the fertilizers to determine the nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) percentages available in each. To fill this need, a new organic fertilizer publication, "Values of Organic Fertilizers" (LC 437), gives the nutrient value of 72 organic products and is available at the OSU/Lane County Extension office.

The publication is one of the most complete guides to fertilizer values. It also contains information about how quickly the fertilizer releases; the percent of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium; seven materials used for reducing soil acidity (liming); helpful notes; a rating of products; and a list of 20 organic bibliographies.

As with all fertilizers, the N-P-K percentages help people to determine the amount of each nutrient in the fertilizer. One of the most difficult things to determine is how much organic fertilizer to use on 1,000 square feet of garden. For example, a fertilizer like Peruvian guano is 12-11-2, which means 12% nitrogen, 11% phosphorus and 2% potassium. In simple terms this means that a 100-pound bag contains 12 pounds nitrogen, 11-pounds phosphorus and 2-pounds potassium.

A simple way to estimate the amount of organic fertilizer to use in your garden follows. For a 12-11-2 mixture, divide the amount desired, for instance one pound of nitrogen, by the percent of nitrogen (12% or .12) available in your product. This equals 8.3 pounds of fertilizer. If five pounds of nitrogen is desired, divide the amount wanted (five pounds) by the percent of nitrogen (12% or .12) and this equals 41.6 pounds of fertilizer.

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